



**Survival Factors Attachment:
Emergency Responder Interviews**

Delray Beach, Florida

HWY19FH008

(13 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

US 441 HIGHWAY ACCIDENT *

DELRAY BEACH, FLORIDA * Accident No.: HWY19FH008

MARCH 1, 2019 *

*

* * * * *

Interview of: CHRIS DEVITO, Battalion Chief

MICHAEL EVANS, Firefighter

JUAN SAAVEDRA, Captain

TIM YOUNG, Firefighter/Driver

LT. RONALD BAILEY

D. ESCOBAR, Firefighter

Palm Beach County Fire Rescue
Station 42
Delray Beach, Florida 33446

Wednesday,
March 6, 2019

APPEARANCES:

SHERYL HARLEY, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

I N T E R V I E W

(6:07 p.m.)

1
2
3 MS. HARLEY: All right, my name is Sheryl Harley. As I
4 explained to you I'm an investigator. I'm with the National
5 Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, D.C. I am here
6 with the first responders out of Palm County -- is it Palm Beach
7 County Fire and Rescue?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, Fire --

9 MS. HARLEY: Is that the proper -- okay, and I'm in Station
10 42, which is also Battalion 4.

11 Today is the 6th of March, and it is 6:07 p.m. approximately.
12 And we're here to talk about first the incident involving the
13 crash on -- I guess it was U.S. 441, it's also State road 7, in
14 Delray Beach that occurred on March the 1st of 2019.

15 So in the room with me is:

16 CHIEF DEVITO: Chris DeVito, Battalion Chief 42, C shift.

17 MR. EVANS: Michael Evans, Firefighter, Engine 42, C shift.

18 CAPT. SAAVEDRA: Juan Saavedra, Captain, Engine 42, C-shift.

19 MR. YOUNG: Tim Young, Driver, Engine 42, C-shift.

20 LT. BAILEY: I'm Ronald Bailey, 40 back floor float. I
21 wasn't on the call. I'm just here for support here.

22 MS. HARLEY: Not a problem. Thanks --

23 LT. BAILEY: I'm learning support staff. Yeah, none of these
24 guys were there.

25 MS. HARLEY: Okay, all right. So that -- so I don't screw
26 this up, can you spell your name for me Chief, please?

1 CHIEF DEVITO: First name is C-H-R-I-S-T-O-P-H-E-R; last name
2 is D as in david, E-V as in Victor, I-T-O.

3 MS. HARLEY: I-T-O. And I'm going to screw up your name,
4 Captain. I'm sorry.

5 CAPT. SAAVEDRA: That's okay. J-U-A-N is the first name.
6 Last name is S-A-A-V-E-D-R-A. Common spelling.

7 (Laughter)

8 MS. HARLEY: Okay. And I think I can manage Evans and I
9 think I can manage Young, so -- okay.

10 MR. YOUNG: But I'm old.

11 MS. HARLEY: All right. So I guess what I'm going to ask you
12 gentleman is, is walk me through it. Tell me what happened.

13 CHIEF DEVITO: At 6:10 -- I believe it was approximately 6:10
14 in the morning we had gotten toned out. We were all pretty much
15 still asleep. I was the first to get up and get to my vehicle. I
16 don't have to do some of the stuff these guys need to do to see
17 what was going on, what the call was. I immediately asked
18 dispatch for an update on the role or excretion that we were
19 toned to. I do that so I can estimate whether or not I need
20 special units for excretions.

21 They gave me an update that it was a Tesla verse semi and to
22 use my discretion, which I toned out an additional engine or
23 ladder truck for that matter because of the equipment and an
24 additional rescue. Two vehicles, minimum would be two people, so
25 I called for a second rescue, and again the ladder truck for the

1 equipment.

2 These guys all got their gear and got in their trucks. We
3 generally wait for each other. It's not a -- it's not always the
4 best intent to have one truck, especially me, I'm a single
5 resource unit, to run out to a scene where I want to be -- I can
6 give a heads up if I'm going to be there by myself. Especially my
7 truck drives a lot faster than everybody else's.

8 So we all left in succession: me, then my EMS captain, the
9 engine, the rescue. I did get there first because of the speed of
10 my vehicle and the fact that I can -- I had a police escort that
11 was blocking certain intersections, which was handy. I rolled up,
12 I could see the semi truck in its position about 300 or so yards
13 from where there was a group of cars in a U-turn on 441. Kind of
14 caught me by surprise because I was anticipating a car under a
15 semi or car into a semi.

16 As I slowed to roll past these people that were waving at me,
17 because you don't know if they're bystanders or whatnot, that's
18 when I noticed to my left in the median the Tesla roofless, with
19 the individual sitting in the driver's seat. I came to an abrupt
20 stop, chose my words carefully in giving my run report noticing
21 that there was a news helicopter already hovering above.

22 I gave my run report of Battalion 42's arrival: two
23 vehicles, heavy damage, possible signal 7 (ph.), because at that
24 point I had yet -- even though I could see the person sitting in
25 the driver's seat, I'm not going to make that call until I can.

1 I get out of the car and walked -- I got out of my car and
2 walked up, direct visualization of what was missing on the
3 individual, realizing that that injury is not compatible with
4 life. Called for a signal 7. At that point my engine rolled up
5 next to me, rescue was in tow. They got out of their truck
6 respectively, going to work, doing their job securing the scene,
7 securing the vehicle. I immediately said to Captain Saavedra that
8 I wanted a sheet or something that we had that we could get out of
9 the rescue to cover the body.

10 Not my first homicide with vehicles that I've dealt with VHI,
11 so we mainly covered the vehicle and the body. I instructed
12 everybody not to touch the vehicle or go inside the vehicle for
13 any matter. Deputies were already on scene, so I knew what they
14 were doing as far as what we were looking at.

15 I instructed Ladder Force 7 and Rescue 54 coming from two
16 opposite directions. I don't know why they called for those two
17 units, but I instructed them to make their way to the semi because
18 I knew that there was an individual in the semi, and to give me
19 their -- you know, what they needed -- their
20 conditions/actions/needs when they got there.

21 Ladder Force 7 was first to arrive on that scene. Was told
22 to shut down the roadway going southbound by S.O. -- I believe he
23 was a Lieutenant for S.O. -- because of debris in the roadway.
24 They then made their way down to me walking the scene, looking for
25 anything that may help us out with what was going on at that

1 point. It was biological in nature as well as parts of the car.

2 They did state to me and to the Lieutenant they noticed that
3 there was a cell phone in the middle of the road, several 100
4 yards from where the accident had occurred. My guys were at the
5 scene. Rescue at that point really had nothing more to do so they
6 were made available. The engine was there to secure the vehicle
7 until S.O. deemed it that they could leave. One of the deputies
8 instructed, to my dislike, instructed to one of my guys to reach
9 in and grab the briefcase that was on the floorboard of the
10 vehicle looking for any kind of identification.

11 I wasn't happy with that. I asked the deputy next time you
12 want anything to go inside of this vehicle that he needs to do it
13 himself. At that point I left the engine to go see the semi by
14 myself, because I wanted to see and get photos there taken for
15 training purposes with my crews, and to make contact with the
16 driver of the semi. I don't leave anybody unspoken to.

17 I made my way down there, spoke to the ladder crew, spoke to
18 the lieutenant and the sergeant that was there, spoke to the
19 driver of the scene. At that point Rescue 42 was cleared, Engine
20 42 cleared, and I cleared leaving Ladder Force 7 by themselves.
21 Rescue 54 had arrived but was cleared immediately by S.O. because
22 there was no medical need for the driver. So they really had
23 nothing to do, so they basically showed up, are you okay, got in
24 their truck and left.

25 Ladder 47 was left there on the scene until VHI cleared them

1 because they were shutting the roadway, which I believe was only
2 another 15 minutes or so after I had left.

3 Juan was the next -- he's on the phone right now. Stand by
4 one second.

5 MR. YOUNG: It never stops.

6 MS. HARLEY: So I'll tell you what, while we're waiting,
7 we'll start with you there, Firefighter Evans. So what did you
8 see when you got on the scene?

9 MR. EVANS: Well, we pulled right up to the vehicle and got
10 out. Noticed obviously Chief was standing there, he had just
11 called a signal 7. We obviously saw the gentleman in the vehicle
12 and there was nothing else -- it was roofless. We went in and I
13 went to go attempt to secure the vehicle, but it was stopped,
14 still turned on. We deemed there's nothing else we could do to
15 secure it, so we just looked around. We tried to see whether
16 there was any more -- anyone else involved, and we noticed the
17 semi down the street. Eventually after we did cover up
18 everything, we wound up walking down to -- because there was a
19 call for, oh, there might be parts further down. And they were in
20 the middle of the road and wound up just being tissue --

21 MR. YOUNG: Yeah, between the car and the truck.

22 MR. EVANS: Yeah, so we went down there to go possibly have
23 to cover some more stuff up and that was not needed, but -- so I
24 had to get a view of the truck and the -- where the accident
25 happened. Other than that, it was just stand by, and we were

1 blocking the roadway northbound with our engine until the S.O.
2 cleared us from the -- and Chief cleared us, because there was
3 nothing else, nothing else to do. They had the road blocked.
4 That's pretty much it. Simple.

5 MS. HARLEY: So Firefighter Young, you had something that you
6 wanted to add to that?

7 MR. YOUNG: Basically what they covered. But the only thing
8 that I noticed when I was standing in front of the car was
9 obviously the tire track path where it obviously avoided all of
10 the obstacles in the road.

11 CHIEF DEVITO: Okay, uh --

12 MR. YOUNG: In the median.

13 CHIEF DEVITO: I pick up -- that was Deputy Chief Joey
14 Cooper. He just instructed me to stop the interview and have you
15 guys contact administration tomorrow.

16 MS. HARLEY: Okay.

17 CHIEF DEVITO: And that was my deputy chief. I just sent him
18 a thing just to let him know that you guys were here. Just, you
19 know, heads up, NTSB is here to speak with us.

20 MS. HARLEY: Let me turn this off, hold on.

21 (Whereupon, at 6:10 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: US 441 HIGHWAY ACCIDENT
 DELRAY BEACH, FLORIDA
 MARCH 1, 2019
 Interview of Palm Beach Co. Fire Rescue

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY19FH008

PLACE: Delray Beach, Florida

DATE: March 6, 2019

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Danielle Klunk
Transcriber

03-06-19

4:30 P.M.

Notes obtained during the interview with first responders from the Palm Beach County Fire Rescue (PBCFR). This interview is being held with first arriving fire department units from Station 42, Battalion 4 located at 14276 Hagen Ranch Road, Delray Beach, Florida to the crash scene on US 441.

(At the request of the fire department personnel present, the interview was not recorded due to the absence of the Battalion Chief. Personnel did agree to speak with the investigator and answer basic questions related to exposure to electric-powered vehicles, emergency response and training.)

Captain Juan Saavedra advised that prior to this crash (on U.S. 441), the station had responded to another electric-powered vehicle (Tesla) crash on Lyons Road, approximately one year ago. The Tesla involved in that crash was not a Model 3. This had been their (the firefighters collectively) first exposure to the Model 3. None of the firefighters were familiar with the operation of the Model 3 or how the keycard was used to power the vehicle on and off. In the earlier crash, the vehicle sustained extensive damage and the airbags had deployed. Both the male and female occupants were conscious and were able to open the door of the car from the inside. The failure of the door handles to present and the locked doors weren't considered an issue at the time because neither event hampered access to the victims.

Though this firefighting crew has not responded to many electric-powered vehicle incidents; they have received training regarding the handling of these types of vehicles. Palm Beach County Fire Rescue Service uses the on-line training platform, Target Solutions, to provide its personnel with continuing education. Target Solutions is a nationally recognized training site used by first responders to receive training, updated safety information and continuing education credits and certifications. Target Solutions also tracks, and store completed skills training and certification records within its database. Captain Saavedra advised that he was unaware of or ever used the downloadable "Tesla" app that provides first responders with vital information regarding the handling of emergency calls for service that involve an electric-powered vehicle (specifically Tesla). It was noted that other fire departments in the state used the "app" whenever they were called out to an incident involving one of these cars. One such jurisdiction is the Fort Lauderdale Fire Department where senior officials are provided with the "app" which is downloaded onto their department phones. The PBCFR Special Operations Division, (SOD), is a specially staffed unit of county firefighters with advanced training in unique, complicated or large-scale emergency events. It is believed that "SOD personnel" would have more access to this information than regular station personnel.

(A discussion took place to discuss lithium-ion batteries and the inherent dangers encounter with them in all modes of transportation (such as Aviation). Though no specific incidents were noted, by the fire department personnel, involving these batteries; the group of firefighters was knowledgeable regarding the dangers associated with the high voltage batteries contained within these cars.

The arrival of Battalion Chief Chris DeVito marks the end of the non-recorded segment of this interview. With B.C. DeVito's permission; the remainder of the interview was recorded.)

Note: During the recorded segment, B.C. DeVito receives a telephone call from headquarters. At the request of the Office of the Fire Chief, the recording was stopped and the interview was terminated.